

GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, December 10, 2008 – 4:00pm

Warnersville Recreation Center – 601 Doak Street

PRESENT MEMBERS: Rose Marie Ponton, Chair, Carl Brower, Jr., Vice-Chair, Paul Brown, Marc Bush, Ken Free

ABSENT MEMBERS: Lori Galbreath, David Hoggard

PRESENT: Steve Branson, Candice Bruton, Candance Campbell, John Hughes, Bonnie Kuester, Betty Lee, Dan Maxson, Mel Melton, Mike Moye, Brooks Mullane, Lane Newsome, Kathy Mabe, Marcie Richardson, Mike Simpson, Laurie Thore, Chris Wilson

The regular meeting of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission was held at Warnersville Recreation Center. Ponton called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 8, 2008 Commission Meeting were approved as submitted.

Recognition

Bonnie Kuester, Director, recognized the Parks and Recreation November Employee of the Month, Betty Lee and December Employee of the Month, Candance Campbell

Warnersville Recreation Center Presentation

Mel Melton, Warnersville Center Director, presented the Commission with events and programs currently held at the center.

OLD BUSINESS

Hagan-Stone Park Property Transfer

Chris Wilson, Parks, Gardens, and Program Support Manager, stated that the deed to Hagan-Stone Park has been transferred to Guilford County. Greensboro Parks and Recreation will continue to manage the park.

Ponton inquired about how the transfer will affect Camp Joy.

Wilson replied stating that Parks and Recreation will continue the programming at Camp Joy although the Camp Joy facility is now owned by the County.

Brower inquired why Parks and Recreation initiated the transfer.

Due to Greensboro's financial situation the past several years the Hagan-Stone transfer was discussed because of the park resides in the county and the long list of needs that often times the City was not able to fund, nor the ability to fund items the department would like for the park to have. Staff looked at a model like Bur-Mil Park, which is owned by the County and managed by the City. The combination of City and County resources proved to be a positive impact for Bur-Mil Park. Hagan-Stone Park would round out the parks that the County owns. Although the County owns the land their financial responsibility is being phased over a four year period of time. There will be a reduction in expenses for the City without eliminating any services. Prior to the economic situation, the County was able to identify dollars for capital improvement towards Hagan-Stone Park during the first year. Staff feels this facility will become more productive due to the transfer.

Wilson reported that the County had one successful bond which allows them to move forward with Bryan Park at Guilford County (BPGC) in regards to development. The County had another bond this year that was not successful. Due to this bond not passing the Bryan Foundation asked Parks and Recreation to consider managing the operation much like Bur-Mil and Hagan-Stone Parks.

Brown inquired about the responsibility of maintenance and who would be responsible for any lawsuit litigations.

Wilson replied stating that maintenance would be a responsibility of the City; however if it is a result of something the County was responsible for then the County would respond with City assistance. The County is responsible for capital and reimbursement of the difference between revenue and expenditures. Wilson stated that from his experience lawsuit litigation would most likely come after both City and County.

Bush informed everyone that this was one of the best cross country seasons this year headed up by Charlie Brown at Hagan-Stone Park for the USA Track and Field Maters cross country national championships in October.

Ponton stated that Hagan-Stone Park was built with Land and Water Conservation Funds in 1964 and there was not a Guilford County Parks and Recreation until 1989 which the reason why it was originally a city park. The land was given by the Hagan family. In 1990 Guilford County did a Master Plan for future county parks but the Hagan-Stone Park area was not included. This park mostly serves the residents in Pleasant Garden and is another reason for the transfer.

Wilson stated that when Hagan-Stone Park was purchased it was done so with the understanding that it would alleviate the burden at Country Park which was being heavily used at the time.

NEW BUSINESS

Downtown Greenway (not on agenda)

Mike Simpson, Watershed Parks and Lakes Director, recognized in attendance Dabney Sanders, Action Greensboro.

Simpson stated that he brings forward two requests pertaining to the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant that the Parks and Recreation trails division is collaborating with Action Greensboro and Greenways, Inc from Durham, NC. Parks and Recreation has worked in the past on the Bicycle, Pedestrian, Greenways Mater Plan with Action Greensboro, most recently on a Fit Community grant received through the Health and Wellness Trust Fund of NC.

Simpson stated that he comes before the Commission regarding the Downtown Greenway Phase I – A, which is a section that would be applied for the PARTF grant. This section travels from Spring Garden Street to the Freeman Mill Road/Lee Street exit area. The PARTF grant is for \$500,000 for construction and associated amenities with Phase I – A. Action Greensboro has agreed to fund the \$500,000 match requirement. To help with scoring purposes our consultant from Recreation Resources, Vonda Martin, suggested producing three documents to support the Downtown Greenway. These documents include the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Greenway Master Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and Downtown Greenway Master Plan. Martin, the agent who would review this grant and who would give recommendation, suggested that in order to receive a higher score that the Parks and Recreation Commission recognize these three documents combined as one document. Once combined, the document would be called the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Simpson requested the Commission to consider approval of combining the documents.

Simpson also requested a recommendation from the Commission for Mayor Yvonne Johnson to sign the PARTF grant once complete. The grant document requires signature from the highest elected official.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Brower and seconded to approve the inclusion of the Downtown Greenways Master Plan, Action Greensboro Master Plan to the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Master Plan. A vote in favor was unanimous.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Brower and seconded to recommend Mayor Yvonne Johnson sign the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant. A vote in favor was unanimous.

Parks and Recreation Rules and Regulations

Commission members were given a copy of the proposed revised version of the Parks and Recreation Rules and Regulations.

Wilson stated that the City has an ordinance that allows for rules and regulations within parks and recreation. This ordinance is now referenced in the revised version. Appendixes have also been attached. These have been attached because often times Parks and Recreation works closely with the Police Department and the Police Department refers to the rules and regulations if the Police Department needs to get into a discussion with someone who is not abiding by the rules. The rules and regulations are often tied to ordinances, laws, or something that is legal binding that perhaps is not quite as appropriate for the rules and regulations; therefore all appendixes have been attached to the rules and regulations.

Wilson continued stating that the proposed changes are almost predominately tied to new laws or new issues. Wilson referenced segways, a new popular device that people ride. There have been recent litigation over segways and the City Attorney advised staff on new appropriate ways to manage segways within Parks and Recreation facilities which is now included in the rules. Also, there have been bicycle laws since the rules were last updated. Another revision includes clarification of what will happen if the rules are not followed. Newly included in the rules is geocaching which happens in the parks and is harmless for the most part. This is a process in which someone hides something for someone else to find, such as in a log, under a bush, or up in a tree. Most of the time they are trinkets to find, however some items are inappropriate and if put in the wrong place they are subject to increase liability, like placing an item in a log and that has not been checked by staff, and then someone placing their hand in the log and taking the risk of getting bit by brown recluse, etc. The department proposes, like many other agencies, to regulate this activity to some extent to have staff awareness. Wilson continued stating that over the past several months' staff has had some need for clarification over permissions regarding firearms to clarify what is appropriate, so this existing rule has been revised. Another addition to the rules is profiteering and that others can not profiteer off of public land in any circumstances unless the City is benefiting in some way. The rules would now include the ban on sexual offenders in parks ordinance. Also, more than twenty people at picnic shelter will be asked to pay the reservation fee. This is to protect the shelters from large groups waiting to enter a shelter and have an event without a fee associated. Per citizen request, clarification has been added to require certain floatation devices in certain instances and include age limits pertaining to watershed park recreation. Endorsement has been included at the end of the document so that there is no misunderstanding regarding what could potentially happen if rules are not followed.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Bush and seconded to approve the revised Parks and Recreation Rules and Regulations. A vote in favor was unanimous.

2009 Parks and Recreation Proposed Fee Schedule

Proposed fee changes were distributed to the Commission.

Dan Maxson, Administrative Services Manager, informed the Commission that staff reviewed the Parks and Recreation existing fee schedule cognizant of competition. Other communities were surveyed during the process.

Staff reviewed program participation and how that particular program has been received throughout the year, if there was any public comment, the impact the current economy is having on our participants, and their ability to pay for a program.

Maxson stated that for many of our programs Guilford County pays the differential for Guilford County non-city residents. This process is less controversial and confrontational for staff and participants. Maxson stated that the Guilford County Parks and Recreation Commission approves the fees for Bur-Mil and Hagan-Stone Parks.

Maxson stated that there are proposed fee changes in the athletic division and the Farmer's Market. If the Commission would like to precede with the proposed changes the next step would be to post the adjustments on the Parks and Recreation website and in Parks and Recreation facilities until the next Commission meeting. This will allow time to generate public input and for the Farmer's Market Advisory Board to review the Farmer's Market fee changes. If the Commission approves the fees in January they would be effective upon adoption or when the program begins.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Brower and seconded for the Commission to table the proposed fees item until the January 2009 Commission meeting.

Playful City

Brooks Mullane, Program Support Manager, stated that the City of Greensboro has the opportunity to be designated as a Playful City USA, which is sponsored by Kaboom. Kaboom has built over 2,000 playgrounds across the US. Kaboom is promoting for the entire nation to become a Playful Nation. This designation would encourage children to have unstructured play outside and exercise. A committee has begun to form with Parks and Recreation staff, however the committee requests a Parks and Recreation Commission Member to serve on the committee. As the committee meets and moves forward with the Playful City application, Parks and Recreation will claim a play date for the entire city and perhaps tying it in with the 75th Anniversary, neighborhood associations, and community watch groups. If chosen, Greensboro would receive highway signs reflecting the designation. There would be local and national media and would market Greensboro and Parks and Recreation. The five cities that are chosen as a Playful City in 2009 will be eligible for a new concept called playground in a box. Information on this can be found on their website. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes adding additional neighborhood playgrounds to make sure every child can get to a playground within walking distance. Greensboro has over 89,000 children ages 0-16 in our 2000 census. Greensboro has 93 neighborhood parks. Greensboro has over 3500 acres of regional and neighborhood parks. Over one million dollars from the 2000 bond was spent on placing new equipment in each of our parks. The department has brand new playgrounds however some need to be more ADA accessible with more ADA accessible equipment. Mullane requested one member from the Commission to serve on the Playful City committee. Mullane also requested endorsement from the Commission to pursue the Playful City designation.

Brower inquired if the department will be looking into installing playground equipment at parks that currently do not have equipment, such as Dorothy Brown Park.

Bruton replied stating that staff will follow up on this inquiry. The next Parks and Recreation Master Plan update should be within the next year, contingent upon funding, and areas will be reviewed that currently do not have play structures.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Bush and seconded to endorse the Playful City USA designation. A vote in favor was unanimous.

2009 Commission Meeting Schedule

There were no objections to the 2009 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting schedule.

Proposed Land Donation

Bruton distributed a map to the Commission showing the proposed land donation site located south of I85 on Elm-Eugene Street. The property consists of over 4 acres. Not included on the map was a stream located at the bottom third of the property known as South Buffalo Creek. Criteria for determining whether or not the donation should be accepted is if it coincides with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan in terms of the need for a neighborhood park or proposed future trail system, what is the natural habitat, and is the parcel adjacent with other parkland or open space. This area is the sight of a proposed trail corridor along South Buffalo Creek. The proposed trail would run to the county east of Keeley Park and west close to Swing Road to connect with the county's Bicentennial Greenway. Field Operations currently maintains the Buffalo Creek area. Additional resources would not be needed from Parks and Recreation. Bruton requested Commission recommendation for Council approval to accept the land donation.

Action Taken

A motion was made by Bush and seconded to recommend City Council approve the proposed land donation. A vote in favor was unanimous.

CIP Process

Bruton informed the Commission that the 2009 Parks and Recreation Bond Referendum passed; however Mayor Yvonne Johnson has submitted to the citizens of Greensboro that bonds would not be sold until the economy improves.

Bruton reported that construction at Barber Park will begin in January 2009 with anticipation of completion in August 2009, weather permitting. Also, it was anticipated that construction at Keeley Park would begin, but in order to move forward with construction at Barber Park funds were borrowed from Keeley Park. Therefore, Keeley Park development has been delayed for approximately one year until there is an additional bond sale.

Bruton reported that the aquatic center included on the bond referendum has generated much enthusiasm in the community regarding the location of the pool and what it will entail. This item is on hold until the bond sale to access the 12 million dollars for construction. Until then determination of the location of the pool, and gaining public input on wants and needs of the community will need to be done. A stakeholders committee will be forming. The first stakeholder meeting will be held December 11, 2009 to determine who else needs to be involved. This committee would likely meet for approximately one year before a design firm is selected. The purpose of the stakeholder committee is to determine location and programming and bring a recommendation to the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Commission would then make a recommendation to City Council.

Bruton distributed the Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Program (CIP) list. The Parks and Recreation Commission CIP subcommittee worked on this list last year to prioritize what was thought then to be a 2010 bond referendum. Since there was a 2008 bond those projects included in that bond have been removed which leaves almost 68 million dollars in projects. The subcommittee worked in assisting staff to identify and prioritize projects. Staff would like to reconvene a subcommittee this year to review the next possible 2012 Parks and Recreation bond referendum.

Bruton stated that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will need to be updated in 2010. This will be a public driven process similar to the process in 1998. Bruton requested Commission Member volunteers for the CIP subcommittee.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

- NONE -

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Kuester encouraged everyone to review the back of the PNN for upcoming Parks and Recreation events.

Kuester stated that the City is not in any better shape than other surrounding cities and has been able to manage things quite well due to dedication and commitment of Parks and Recreation employees. Because of the fact that the City currently has a hiring freeze it clearly indicates that Parks and Recreation employees have to do more than normal in assisting with vacant positions. Commission support by attending events, etc. is important to staff when they have continued efforts to do great things for the City.

Kuester turned to Laurie Thore to report on the 75th Anniversary Tabloid.

Thore reported that the Parks and Recreation Department is partnering with the News & Record for the Parks and Recreation 75th Anniversary 12 page tabloid. The tabloid will be available as a News & Record insert on January 4, 2009 and available at Parks and Recreation facilities. The tabloid focuses on the past, present, and the future of Parks and Recreation. Thore invited everyone to attend A Day at the Park on Saturday, June 27, 2009 at Country Park. Country Park was the first park to open on July 4, 1934. News & Record is a major sponsor for this event.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Marc Bush reported that the NCAA Division III Soccer Championships were held at Bryan Park the previous weekend. This event was also hosted by Bryan Park in 2004 & 2005. Bush stated that the Sports Commission and aquatic center stakeholders are very interested in being a part of the planning process.

Rose Marie Ponton reported that the Parks and Recreation Department and Commission participated in the Greensboro Christmas Parade with staff, members, and others riding on the Parks and Recreation float.

With no further business Ponton adjourned the meeting at 5:17 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Richardson, Executive Assistant
Greensboro Parks and Recreation

